

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Your Choice!

The *posuk* in this week's *parasha* says

I have called the Heavens and the Earth as witnesses against you today: life and death I have put before you, blessing and curse. And you should choose life in order that you and your children should live. (29, 19)

Rashi brings *Chazal* who point out that the words "you should choose life" is Hashem exhorting us to choose the path of life. They explain this using a *mashal* (parable): A father implored his son to choose a good piece of property as his inheritance. Not only did he implore him, but actually took him to the piece of land that was good, stood his son on it, and

said "Choose this piece for yourself!" One may think, however, that the *mashal* appears to be confounding. The father is obviously worried about his son's choice of what to take, or else he wouldn't have to implore to begin with. Furthermore, the father actually puts his son on the land and tells him to choose this piece, further questioning his son's ability to make the right choice. Does it not make more sense for the father just to write in his will which portion his son should get, thus guaranteeing the proper land to his son!? *Chazal* are actually pointing out a very deep message to us through this father's actions: the son has to be the one to make the final choice. When people decide on a course of action, they have already emotionally invested into the choice they've made. Once a person is invested, he or she will make a concerted effort into ensuring that the choice will succeed, more so than if one had been put into a situation not of one's own choosing, regardless of how good it is. No matter how much the father impresses upon his children the right path to take, even proving to them which one is better,

RABBI ADI ROLAND
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

A certain rabbi would deliver a steady Torah class in one of the Israeli settlements. One day, there was an infiltration of terrorists, and a warning went out to the surrounding areas not to travel on the roads towards the settlements. However, the rabbi had to travel specifically at that time to deliver his *shiur*.

On the one hand, he feels he should go despite the danger and be confident that the merit of the public Torah learning will protect him, as the Sages say, "Those who guard a *mitzvah*, will know no evil". Conversely, perhaps he should not bring himself into a dangerous situation, and should cancel the *shiur*.

Q Is the rabbi allowed to travel to the
— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>

ultimately, that important, initial step has to be of their own doing.

Pulling this lesson back into the *posuk*, we see what Hashem is doing: He is laying before us two paths, good and bad, He is telling us which one to choose, and He will constantly tell us throughout our lives which one is the better one to choose. However, we are the ones to choose which one we are to take, ensuring that the upright and good life that we live is one of our own choosing. This way, we will be more invested in ensuring we are successful as being true *ovdei* (servants of) Hashem, leading to true emotional fulfillment with Torah and *mitzvos*.

Wishing everybody a *kesiva v'chasiva tova* and a *gut gebenedich yor!*

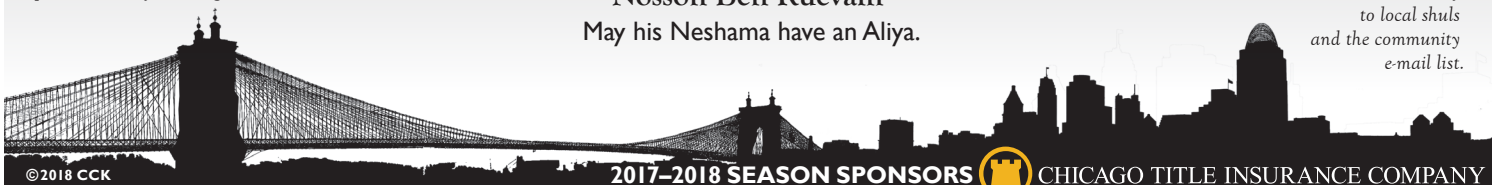
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THE RABBI WAS ASKED


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settlement to deliver the *shiur*, or should he cancel it?

A *Sefer Chassidim* says (955) regarding one who travels far to learn Torah and goes through dangerous paths, he is solely responsible for anything that happens to him, for he should have waited until the danger passed. The *Sefer Chassidim* explains that the concept of one traveling for a *mitzvah* will not be damaged does not apply when danger is commonplace. In such an instance, avoiding danger supersedes Torah learning.

However, *Meshech Chochma* (*Terumah*) writes that for public Torah learning one must be prepared even to give up one's life, as we find by Yehoshua who was punished for not studying Torah during the war he waged.


We also find in the Talmud (*Kesubos* 77b) that a Rabbi would busy himself teaching Torah to highly contagious sick people, because public Torah learning protects from harm.

We must note, though, that this all applies to one who learns Torah *lishma*—with no ulterior motive. We may then suggest that the rabbi would be allowed to travel to the settlement to teach Torah if he will teach it *lishma*. 

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

REFAEL LOST HIS JOB. HE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO look for new employment, but it was not going very well. As the hunt for a new job dragged on longer and longer, making ends meet was getting harder and harder. After one interview Re-

fael was told, “We have 19 other applicants for this job—why should you get it more than anyone else?” Feeling somewhat lackluster after his months of unemployment, Refael didn't answer. He left with the feeling that he was not any closer to finding a way to feed his family. Late that night though, to his amazement the company made him an offer. Then the man who had interviewed him told him why he had been chosen. Said the man from Human Resources, “After a long day of interviewing candidates, I stopped in at a shul to daven Ma'ariv. I opened the door to the shul and saw that all seats were taken. A young boy saw me and jumped up saying, “you look tired, you need the seat, please take mine.” I asked the boy for his name and the last name was the same as yours. I asked him if his father's first name was Refael. When

he answered yes, I knew he was your child. A fine character like that doesn't happen by itself, it's learned from the actions of the parents. A refined person like yourself is an asset to any business. We're taking you.” 

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A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER


What *posuk* in this week's *parasha* does the Rambam cite as the source for *Moshiach* and his imminent arrival?

Extra Credit: How does this *posuk* indicate an imminent arrival?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 

TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY


RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In 1906, Cincinnati began to receive Sephardic immigrants from Turkey, specifically from the Asian side of the Dardanelles. By 1909, Turkish Jews from the area of Salonica (now part of Greece), also began to arrive. Upon their arrival they were referred to as “Jerusalem Jews,” as the Turkish Jews were very foreign to the Ashkenazic Jews of Cincinnati. The Sephardic Jews did not have an easy time establishing their own communal institutions. In 1919 they were still trying to raise money to establish a cemetery for their community. That year a fortuitous donation jumpstarted their efforts. A unique Turkish Jew from Salonica named Hayim Hasid, who only shortly before then had begun living in Cincinnati and died before the cemetery was bought, donated \$100 towards the burial society. Hasid was only 30 inches tall and had been a court jester for the Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid. As Sultan Hamid was paranoid of assassination, many of his court were under suspicion of plotting against him. When suspicion fell on Hasid, he ran for his life and ended up as a sideshow for a traveling circus. When the community had finally acquired land to build a synagogue in the early 1930s, Rabbi Eliezer Silver helped their cause by using his many contacts to supply them with building materials for free or at discounted prices. The Synagogue closed in 1993. 

SOURCE: “Baby Coffin Holds Jester.” *Cincinnati Post*, 29 Apr 1919. Retrieved from Newsbank, 5 Sept 2018. Yerushalmi, Isaac. *Sephardic Life in Cincinnati, 1906-1976: A Synopsis*. Sephardic Beth Shalom Congregation, 1976.

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